



## THE ORTHODOX WORD

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Cover: The cradle of Orthodoxy in America — Spruce Island off Kodiak, Alaska, where Father Herman of Alaska lived and died; from a drawing by Fr. Herman's spiritual son, Skhima-monk Sergey (Simeon Yanovsky), in *Outline of the American Orthodox Mission*, Valaam Monastery, St. Petersburg, 1894. Page 194: From a lithograph of E. I. Fesenko, Odessa, 1911. Pages 201, 210: Line engraving and map by Br. Gleb, Fr. Herman Brotherhood. Page 213: From *Outline of the American Orthodox Mission*. Page 217: Photograph taken in Jordanville, N. Y., in spring, 1960.

The map on pages 210-211 may be purchased separately for 30 cents.

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## ORTHODOXY IN AMERICA

### THE PAST ———

has left America an inestimable treasure, the sense of true Orthodoxy that was instilled in it by saintly missionaries, first in Alaska, then spreading gradually south and east. These holy men, instructors of the True Faith, emitted the fragrance of the Holy Spirit like incense before God, and thus bequeathed to their descendents the savor of genuine Christianity, which, if it be not lost, makes of believers the salt of the earth, preserving and imparting the life in Christ.

### THE PRESENT ———

while full of movement and excitement, offers nothing of lasting value, and threatens only to deprive slumbering believers of this precious savor.

### THE FUTURE ———

heralds a darkness greater than ever before, as it prepares the universal triumph of pseudo-Christianity; but, hidden from the world, militant Orthodox Christians will preserve their spiritual treasure, selling everything else to buy the field in which it is buried, and will prepare, in watchfulness and prayer, to meet the coming Christ.





ST. INNOCENT OF IRKUTSK

1680-1731

*An icon based on an original portrait of the Saint.*

*The following article, slightly abridged, is from Saint Innocent the Wonderworker, First Bishop of Irkutsk, which first appeared in 1931, the 200th anniversary of the Saint's death, in Harbin, Manchuria. The author was himself a missionary to the Far East in the early part of this century.*

## ST. INNOCENT -- PATRON TO ORTHODOX AMERICA

By BISHOP NESTOR

*The first Orthodox bishop to the world of the rising sun, because of his profound spiritual life, became the first saint of the Eastern missions and thus a patron saint to the farthest Orthodox missionary outpost -- America.*

**S**T. INNOCENT, who was named John before becoming a monk, was of noble birth, being a Kulchitsky. Of his parents it is known only that they were devout and God-fearing people. In the middle of the 17th century they moved from Volhynia to Little Russia.

John was born about 1680. When he reached adolescence, he was sent to school in Kiev, where he studied rhetoric, philosophy, theology, and languages. Later this school was transformed into a theological academy, and John graduated from it in 1706. His principal occupations while there were prayer and study of the word of God. Upon completing the Academy he became a monk and entered the brotherhood of the Kiev-Caves Monastery with the name of Innocent.

In 1710 he was called by Metrop. Stephen Yavorsky, his teacher, to Moscow to teach in the Moscow Slavonic-Greek-Latin Academy, where he supervised the students and taught literature, moral theology, and philosophy and was named pro-rector of the Academy; he remained in this function until 1719. After this he was assigned as chief naval-chaplain in Finland.

But the Lord had destined His chosen one for a new and higher service -- to be an enlightener of the most remote corner of Russia: Eastern Siberia.

At that time Siberia was being slowly populated by Russian pioneers. On the banks of numerous rivers they built winter cabins and stockades for military defence against the attacks of various tribes; and they built cities for the administration of the border region. Together with the settlement of Russians in the vastness of Siberia, the Christian faith was spread.



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By the middle of the 17th century Russians had reached the boundaries of the Chinese Empire — Lake Baikal and the Amur River. Several small fortress-stockades were established at that time: the fortress of Nerchensk, of Selenginsk, and the town of Irkutsk. Thanks to these Russian settlements intercourse was opened with China; and from them the Orthodox faith too penetrated to China.

In 1650 some Cossacks settled on the left bank of the Amur at the town of Albazin. In 1685 they were besieged by Chinese troops, and 300 were taken captive; 45 of these chose to enter the service of the Chinese Emperor, who received them very kindly, settling them in the capital, Peking, and attaching them to his honor guard. There the Orthodox had their own church, dedicated to the Divine Wisdom, the Hagia Sofia; they had brought church utensils with them from Albazin and forcibly taken a priest. These prisoners served as the kernel of the future Orthodox Russian mission in China.

At the head of the first mission was Archimandrite Hilarion, who died in 1718. In his place the Holy Synod designated St. Innocent and on March 5, 1721, in the presence of Emperor Peter I, had him consecrated bishop. In the Synodal ukase it is stated that Innocent was consecrated bishop "for the preaching of the word of God and for the increase of the Orthodox Eastern faith and piety in the Chinese realm, where previously there had never been hierarchs."

## THE FAR EASTERN MISSION

The Saint took about a year on his trip to Siberia as far as Irkutsk. The trip was painful and difficult. The severe climate, the unknown regions, the absence of roads, the wild animals, the nomads — all this St. Innocent and his companions<sup>1</sup> had to bear. But yet more grief, more privations and sorrow, fell to the lot of the envoys at the border of China, in Selenginsk, in fruitless waiting for permission from the Chinese government to enter Peking. Three factors stood in the way: the intrigues of Jesuits who lived in China and took measures to prevent the propagation of Orthodoxy; the unsuccessful wording of the letter, where, desiring to conceal the high rank of the Saint, it calls him a "spiritual person, a great lord"; and temporary complications with China because of some Mongols who had crossed the Russian border.

1. The Saint's entourage consisted of: two hieromonks, two hierodeacons, five singers, two servants, and one cook. (*Trans. note.*)

## ST. INNOCENT

All attempts of the Russian government, and of the Saint himself, to gain entry into China, were in vain. And thus St. Innocent spent three years, in privation, sorrow, and failure, on the border of China. How difficult it was for him to live in Selenginsk may be gathered from his reports to the Holy Synod — which took a year to travel each way — where he wrote: "I am very sad, not seeing the path on which I am going.... Foxes have holes in which to rest, but I have nowhere to lay my head; I wander from house to house..." Even the meager salary of the Saint and the maintenance of his entourage were cut off by the governor of Irkutsk.

And thus the mission remained without means or refuge, and the Saint's entourage, in order to exist, took up fishing and accepted donations from kind people. The Saint himself painted icons (some of which were preserved even to the present century in Eastern Siberia) for their benefactors and went about in the simplest clothing, which he mended himself. His only consolation was serving in the old cathedral of Selenginsk. The situation improved somewhat when the kind rector of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Selenginsk gave them refuge in a house belonging to the monastery. But all these failures were sent by Divine Providence, which wisely orders all for the good. For indeed, living beyond the Baikal, the Saint taught the heathen Buryat Christian faith, was an "apostle in the Mongol tongues," and in this fashion made fragrant with faith the farthest bounds of Russia.

Thus it was pleasing to the Divine Providence to give as a blessing for all Siberia a bishop-podvizhnik equal to the Apostles, a guardian for all times; for in the person of St. Innocent "the whole Siberian land has a great teacher and a marvellous preceptor in faith."

Three years St. Innocent lived in Selenginsk, and during this time many heathen Buryat turned to Christ, thanks to the preaching, the conversation, and simply the example of the Saint. News of him spread far and wide among the isolated Buryat and Mongol villages and nomad camps; and this news awakened the simple hearts of these children of nature, appearing as a bright ray in their dark lives. Then, in March, 1725, the Saint was assigned by the Holy Synod to the Ascension Monastery in Irkutsk, pending a new disposition.

In Irkutsk the Saint was forced as before to remain without official duties. And so he occupied himself with religious conversations with laymen who came to him, and with catechizing the heathen Buryat. In



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1726 he travelled with the first Russian ambassador to China once more to Selenginsk, only to be forced again to wait there without result... In truth, the righteous man has many sorrows!... Thus the homeless archpastor wandered from place to place...

### THE FIRST BISHOP OF IRKUTSK

Finally in 1727, on August 26, a ukase was received from the Synod designating St. Innocent the first bishop of Irkutsk. Earlier a vicar-bishop of Tobolsk had lived for some time in Irkutsk, but to be assigned there was regarded by the clergy as a great punishment. This, however, was not the way St. Innocent looked upon his assignment to Irkutsk. Above all he saw in it the will of Heaven and the blessing of God; again, no kind of difficulties could frighten St. Innocent, and even without this his life had been full of every kind of burden, bitter trials, humiliation and sorrow. Thus, after six years of involuntary wandering the wanderer-bishop finally received shelter and refuge... But even now the lot of the Saint was not eased. It was not for rest that he came to the newly-opened diocese, but in order to drink the cup to the dregs -- the cup of all possible sorrows and suffering, which the Lord gives to all who love Him: *ye shall drink of My cup* (St. Matt. 20: 23).

It cannot be said that the citizens of Irkutsk bore themselves with love toward their new archpastor -- especially the officials. The local authorities stopped his salary, on the grounds that it was to be paid him only should he be residing in China, and not in Irkutsk. The citizens refused the Saint's request to give him a place to live in the city; and so he was forced, notwithstanding the difficulty of communication with Irkutsk across the Angara River, to settle in the Ascension Monastery. And only toward the end of 1728 was he finally assigned a dwelling on orders from Petersburg.

The Saint had many sorrows of a purely spiritual character, caused by the dark condition of his flock. Siberian morals at that time may without exaggeration be called wild, unrestrained; drunkenness, debauchery, foul language, and brawling were typical manifestations.

St. Innocent required that on Sundays priests read the booklets sent by the Holy Synod, entitled "The Commandments, with Commentary," and also the teachings of the Fathers of the Church. In instructing his priests, he spoke to them of the importance and responsibility of the priestly office. "Priests," he said, "are builders of the Divine mysteries, a light in darkness, the salt of the earth, stars of heaven, trumpets

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that destroy the walls of the city of sin, pastors who are obliged to drive away the wolves; priests must be zealous in preaching the word of God and in instructing their spiritual children."

St. Innocent established a Russian school in conjunction with the Mongol school, from which were to come future pastors. He himself called teachers for the school and ordered the clergy to send their own children between the ages of 7 and 15 to the school without delay.

The Saint ordained priests with care and chose worthy ones; he supported the custom which the parishioners had of themselves selecting persons they considered worthy from among their midst and sending them to the bishop for ordination.

Exhorting his priests to instruct their parishioners, the Saint himself often turned to his flock with words of instruction. In his sermons he set himself sternly against their vices and gently exhorted his listeners to fulfill God's commandments. Multitudes flocked to hear the teaching of their archpastor. In his many sermons St. Innocent called his flock, whose life was not very elevated, to the height of Christian perfection. Later, around the year 1800, when the glorification of the Saint began, various Siberian families turned up as many as seventy sermons of Bishop Innocent's, which had been devoutly preserved by the descendents of his listeners.

Whenever bread became scarce in Siberia -- and at that time this happened frequently -- the archpastor himself prayed before the Lord for abundance of the fruits of the earth and asked his priests to do the same. At times of approaching misfortune he celebrated lengthy services for the prevention of the just judgement of God.

"In the city of Irkutsk," the Saint wrote in 1728, "debauchery has multiplied, and for this the Divine anger will come upon the sons of rebellion." And indeed, there was a drought through the whole Irkutsk diocese that year. The Saint ordered prayers to be raised to the Lord in all churches for the sending down of rain. The prayers of the holy archpastor were heard: at the end of July a heavy rain came, and the terrible danger of famine vanished.

In the course of his short stay in the see of Irkutsk, which lasted four years and three months, the Saint established a firm foundation for the success of the Christian faith in the Irkutsk region.

The whole life of St. Innocent was one of much labor and unhappiness. But it was most of all in Siberia that he endured misfortunes



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and deprivations. Here he travelled truly a hard and sorrowful path. Possessing great humility, the Saint saw in himself the special care of God and did not murmur, and did not ask to be transferred to another diocese.

The Saint loved to retire by himself to pray in a cave which had been dug for himself by the founder of the Ascension Monastery, Gerasim; the Saint loved also to pray over the grave of Gerassim.

Every night the Saint read the works of the Holy Fathers or wrote spiritual instruction for his flock. He was extremely strict in fulfilling the monastic rules, and he asked the same of the monks of the monastery. At home he lived simply. Sometimes he retired to the Monastery village of Elanka some ten miles from Irkutsk and there took part in work in the fields.

St. Innocent was exceptionally revered by the people as a righteous and devout man and was a *podvizhnik* of God endowed from above with the gift of foretelling. For example, once when he was invited to serve the Liturgy on the feast day of a certain village church, on July 9, he replied: "Good, we will go there in summer and return in winter." These strange and incomprehensible words were understood by the villagers only when, on that very morning, there was a large snowfall and the Saint was taken back to Irkutsk by a winter path, on a sleigh.

The Lord taught those around the Saint by means of signs that he was one of His chosen servants. Thus, for example, at the time of a church procession which took place during a downpour, when everyone was drenched, not a single drop of rain fell on the Saint's vestments.

He was a man of prayer and labor. At night he used to walk around the monastery and pray on all four sides of the church and give his archpastoral blessing to the monastery; residents of Irkutsk remembered this well and believed that after his death too he would guard his Ascension Monastery with his blessing. This is why in the troparion to the Saint it is said: "guard with thy prayers this city from all misfortune and sorrow."

His constant labors, the severe Siberian climate, his long journeys, and sorrow and affliction broke down the already frail health of St. Innocent. He fell ill and in the autumn of 1731 lay in bed, unable to celebrate the services. In the morning of November 27, 1731, he peacefully departed to the Lord, being about fifty years of age. Amid the weeping of his flock, the body of the Saint was buried in the church of the Tichvin Icon of the Mother of God in the Ascension Monastery.



The Ascension Monastery in Irkutsk

The great, high, and holy work of Bishop Innocent was not performed against a broad, well-lit background; but its fruits were clear and perceptible to the whole region. Missionary work among the natives after St. Innocent grew and was spread through the efforts of his disciples.

And departing to the Lord, looking back on the good toil of his life, on the fruits of his apostolic labors, and seeing how the Church of Christ had grown and expanded, St. Innocent could with full right say to the Father Most High, together with the Prophet and the Apostle: *Behold I and the children which God hath given me* (Is. 8:18; Hebrews 2:13).

## THE MIRACULOUS INTERCESSOR

Many marvellous signs were performed at the grave of the Saint; the people firmly believed in the incorruption of his relics and his early canonization. This faith was turned into certainty, and certainty into actuality, when 33 years after his death (1764) the Saint's healing body and clothing were found untouched by corruption, despite the dampness of the place....

In 1783, according to the Irkutsk Annals, on the Sunday of All Saints the Ascension Monastery burned. All the cells, three churches,



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and two bells were destroyed. There remained the one wooden church dedicated to the Tichvin Mother of God, where the Bishop was buried. This church stands to the present day as a sign of God's miracle.

Many miracles were worked at the grave of the Saint. In 1770 Pelagia Sudeikina, who lived in Irkutsk, became seriously ill with a fever. During her illness she had a vision: it seemed to her that she was standing in the Tichvin church and the Saint was celebrating matins. She asked his blessing. The Saint came out of the altar, blessed her, and then sent a radiant youth to her with a small piece of artos. She ate it and felt herself to be well. Wishing to thank her healer, Pelagia asked what prayer she should say to him. The Saint came out to her again and unrolled a piece of paper on which was written: *My gracious preceptor, treasury of compassion, teacher of right faith, praise of hierarchs, intercessor of the helpless, our father and hierarch, pray to God for us.* On awakening, Pelagia felt herself completely well and got up immediately.

A merchant of Yakutsk, Paul Lebedev, fractured his foot. From this he became so ill that he began to prepare himself for death. In the night of January 3, 1785, into the room where the sick man lay came the Saint with a staff in his hand and said: "Ask help from Innocent, who is in Irkutsk." Lebedev awoke, but then again dozed off, attaching no particular significance to the vision. The Saint again appeared and, reproaching the sick man for want of faith, struck the floor with his staff. Lebedev, on awakening, saw on the floor the mark of the staff, and he began to believe. Before dawn the Saint appeared to the sick man for the third time, and the terrible pain was replaced by mild itching. In the morning Lebedev could already walk without crutches, and he quickly made his way to the grave of his healer.

In 1786 Archpriest Iakov Zagoskin noticed that his eyesight was failing. He suffered long and finally was no longer able to see at all. Hearing of the miracles which St. Innocent was granting, the sick man turned to him constantly with prayer for help. Once, sitting in an armchair, he fell into a light sleep. Suddenly before him appeared St. Innocent in full vestments, just as he was in the grave. The Saint placed his right hand on the sick man's head and enjoined him to call his name more frequently. After a short time the archpriest began to distinguish surrounding objects, and then he could see everything clearly.

In 1796 a feeble-minded woman was brought from Ekaterinburg to Irkutsk. Who she was, what her name was — no one knew at that



Courtesy of the Convent of Our Lady of Vladimir, San Francisco, Calif.

### Troparion, Tone 3

*Lamp of the Church most luminous,  
Thou hast enlightened this land with the rays of thy virtues,  
And by healing a multitude of those who come to thy shrine with faith  
Thou hast glorified God.  
We beseech thee, our father, St. Innocent,  
Defend with thy prayers this land  
From all misfortune and sorrow.*



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time. She became seriously ill and begged money from some good people, saying: "I have to go on the other side of the river and place a candle there where the people live who are dressed in black, and where the starrets is buried." For the duration of the whole service at the monastery the sick woman fervently prayed before an icon of the Mother of God and went often to the place where the tomb of the Saint was. Within two days the feeble-minded woman had not only received healing from her affliction, but even began to reason quite clearly. Her mental disorder completely disappeared. She told who she was and where she was from, and added that the Saint had appeared to her in a dream and ordered her to go to confession and receive Holy Communion. He told her that soon, on a certain day, she would die. And in fact, she did die on the day indicated by the Saint.

Once two men came to Ascension Monastery, where the relics of St. Innocent are buried, for a stroll. They entered the church and stopped in front of the shrine of the Saint of God and began to blaspheme: one took the Saint by the hand, the other by the foot. The Lord quickly punished them for their audacity. On the way home the carriage in which they were riding turned over, and one of the blasphemers fractured his hand, and the other his foot.

### THE SAINT OF IRKUTSK

Besides these miracles, there have been many miracles at various times not only at the Saint's grave, but also in parts of European Russia. Many laymen had in their homes icons of the Saint and lit candles before them. They were waiting for the day indicated by God and known by Him alone, for the glorification by the whole Church of the Irkutsk Wonderworker. In 1800 the citizens of Irkutsk gave a written request to Bishop Benjamin, with the signatures of 389 representatives of the city, that the Bishop act as intermediary for the canonization of St. Innocent and the uncovering of his relics; for the inhabitants of the region were unanimous in their testimony of his incorruption and his miracles.

Notwithstanding the undoubted voice of the people and the signatures of reliable witnesses, the Holy Synod did not hurry with this important matter... Finally, in December, 1804, the Holy Synod, with the approval of Emperor Alexander I, decreed publicly: 1. That the body of the first bishop of Irkutsk, Innocent, be declared perfect holy relics, and that it be placed, with fitting devotion, in the Ascension Monastery in

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Irkutsk; and 2. to commence, for those people who desire it, all-night vigil services and the singing of molebens to the Saint, and to perform the service appropriate to him, and to enter into the appropriate church books, together with other saints, the following: "November 26, commemoration of the decease of *St. Innocent*, First Bishop of Irkutsk, Wonderworker." In fulfillment of these instructions Bp. Benjamin of Irkutsk, on Feb. 5, 1805, celebrated the solemn translation of the Saint's relics to the Ascension Cathedral.

### THE RIGHTEOUS LIVE FOREVER

Thus for 200 years the relics of the Siberian Saint, the Wonderworker Innocent, adorned the city of Irkutsk and made fragrant all of great Siberia. But when the Russian people began to squander its moral treasure and, like the prodigal son, forgot the commandments of God and came to resemble a swineherd -- then grief and sorrow were poured out upon the land of the New Israel. Something unheard of in the life of nations -- sacrilege of holy objects, of the temples of God and His saints -- lashed the whole Russian land. The shrines of almost all the saints were destroyed together with churches, and relics were seized, uncovered, and placed in museums by the godless power. Thus was sacrilege committed also, with the permission of the Most High, on the relics of St. Innocent the Wonderworker.

To facilitate their seizure of the Saint's relics, the Bolsheviks spread the rumor that in the shrines of many saints the supposed uncorrupted relics had turned out to be dummies stuffed with rags, stones, and the like. They decided to make a public example of St. Innocent's relics by uncovering them and exposing the "hoax" in the sight of all. Accordingly, one day early in the morning a large military detachment, armed with machine guns, surrounded the monastery. They opened the cathedral and forced the monks to open the shrine and uncover the relics. They placed the relics on a table, unceremoniously shaking and weighing them, and composed an official record of the examination -- thereby inadvertently giving their own testimony to the incorruption of the relics.

When news of the uncovering of the relics spread, people rushed out in a wave to the monastery -- heartbroken believers as well as the simply curious. The holy relics of St. Innocent lay naked on a table... They gave off a pleasant fragrance. The color of the body was light yellow, the color of wheat grains. The body was of medium stature; on the head not much hair, black with some gray; the forehead straight, wider



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than average; the eyes and cheeks very much sunken, the nose shrunken; the beard black and slightly oblong, the ends of the hairs gray. The arms were crossed. In appearance the holy relics gave the impression of a man not long dead.

The relics lay for a long time in such a condition, and people filed by in a never-ending line. They set up a guard and collected 28,000 signatures on a petition for the holy relics to remain and be restored to their previous state. But the list was stolen, and soon the relics themselves were seized by Bolshevik troops and sent to European Russia.

According to another eyewitness, a doctor, the following miracle occurred just before the uncovering of the relics. "On a hunting trip an argument broke out over religion, and during it an atheist commissar in anger used the most abusive language with respect to St. Innocent's relics. On the way back the commissar developed a severe pain in the throat, so that he could hardly swallow. At about midnight I was awakened and told that he was near death. And indeed, he was in a terrible state. His throat and neck were swollen to the size of his head and were a purplish-red color. Looking at me, he gathered his last strength and whispered hoarsely that he was being punished for his blasphemy, that he repented, and that if the Saint would help him, he would have a moleben served. I did what I could, but his state was hopeless. It is an amazing miracle how near to us is God, Who accepts the repentance of sinners. I saw the commissar in several days, and he looked as if he had never been sick. He had a moleben served and became a believer."

*In 1931 the relics of St. Innocent were reported to be in an antireligious museum in Yaroslavl; their whereabouts today are not known. Perhaps they have been destroyed by the Soviet authorities, whose attempts to desecrate them and use them for atheist propaganda have only served to testify to their incorruption and miraculous power. Whatever their fate, St. Innocent himself continues to intercede today for those who pray to him. Originally the bearer of the Christian Gospel to the Far East, he is now a heavenly protector also of America, the last outpost of the Far Eastern Mission. The greatest Orthodox missionary to America, Bishop Innocent Veniaminov, was born in the prefecture of Irkutsk, raised in the school founded by St. Innocent, and bore his name; and churches dedicated to St. Innocent were to be found in the early centers of Orthodoxy in America -- a testimony to the continuity of the spiritual heritage received in America through the Saint of Irkutsk.*

## THE CHARACTER AND PATH OF THE ORTHODOX MISSION

*Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

*And he that reapeth receiveth wages,*

*and gathereth fruit unto life eternal:*

*that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.*

St. John 4: 35-6

**W**HEN OUR LORD Jesus Christ began to serve the people, He called upon simple-hearted men to follow Him. Sensing with their hearts the Divine nature of the new Teacher, they abandoned everything and followed Him, becoming then and for two thousand years to come witnesses of His Divinity before the entire world. At the same time they began to resemble Him, His heavenly qualities reflected in them. It was this Divine love, like a holy fire, that wounded their hearts, and they could not but exuberantly proclaim His teaching of the new birth. *I am come to send fire on the earth* (St. Luke 12: 49), said our Lord -- and the hearts of His followers became alight with His Divine supernatural light. *Think ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division* (St. Luke 12: 51), said our Lord -- and His followers cut themselves off from *the world that lies in evil* (I John 5: 19) to become partakers of Heaven, which already in the flesh they had begun to experience. *Follow Me*, said our Lord -- and His disciples followed, calling to others: *Come and see* our Divine Master (St. John 1: 43, 46). And they too went and became new beings.

Such is the nature and the fervor of the Orthodox Mission. At no particular period of Church history can it be said to have attained perfection, for it has always been a prominent part of the Orthodox life, the life in Christ. The Apostles began this mission, the Martyrs strengthened it, the Church Fathers defended it, and all Orthodox Christians



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throughout the centuries continue it by living and witnessing Christ. The Orthodox Church has never devised a plan nor organized an administrative apparatus for the persuasion and conversion of the heathen; the Orthodox approach has always been direct, the call to share the Church's life of grace being most effectively preached by the life of holiness the missionary himself leads. The extraneous means used in the Western missions to attract converts are foreign to the Orthodox idea of mission.

Perhaps the most exemplary, and certainly the most far-reaching, of Orthodox missions was that of *Sts. Cyril and Methody*, the 9th century enlighteners of the Slavs. In modern times, almost unknown to the West, there has been the splendid and fruitful eastbound missionary movement whose leading representatives came from the famous Caves Monastery of Kiev in the early 18th century. The one who took the lead among these missionaries was *Metropolitan Philothey*, a great *podvizhnik*, though as yet uncanonized. Others followed: *St. Innocent of Irkutsk*, who manifested sanctity so radiantly that he was the first of these men to be canonized and thus became the heavenly protector of the newly-won lands; *Sts. John of Tobolsk, Sophrony of Irkutsk, and Paul of Tobolsk*; not to mention many others who have not yet been canonized. Thanks to the vigorous efforts of these men, by the end of the century Orthodoxy had reached distant America, where new apostles, the equal of the earlier missionaries and in the same spirit, were revealed.

All of these men were inspired by deep fervor and faith, gifts of God which they were impelled to share with those who were still in the darkness of unbelief. The vast new territory, out to the shores of the Amur River and the Pacific, gave them ample ground for their holy activity. They had a common approach to missionary labor: they would choose the most suitable place; build a monastic-type dwelling, enclosed by a fence against the ways of the world, with a church which served as the center of a Christian family-like community and where was celebrated the daily round of services; and then, having the Holy Spirit in their hearts, they would open the doors to those who hungered for the Word of God. The natives would come, and soon a family of the new brothers would be strong enough to carry on by themselves; and the missionary, God's servant, would move to more distant regions to bring to others the heaven-sent tidings of the Kingdom of God.

## THE ORTHODOX MISSION

Today, when the Christian Gospel has reached almost the last corner of the world and modern inventions have reshaped man's whole mode of life, the Orthodox mission remains the same. Let not the wise of this world tempt young missionary vigor to seek new, "modern" ways that promise success; there are none outside the tested Orthodox path. True, this path is narrow, hard, and dangerous -- but it is the shortest path to the goal, which is living contact with God. All other paths lead astray, inevitably bringing both pastor and flock to complete submersion in the spirit of worldliness, to a state of spiritual sleep hidden behind a facade of activity where they only fancy to be saving their souls. The multitudes of modern sects furnish numerous examples of a claim and a desire for Christian witness that are proved inadequate by the total absence in them of genuine experience of *the spiritual life*, which is, in the words of Bishop Theophan the Recluse, *an entirely different world, into which no human wisdom penetrates*.

It is the Orthodox mission to open a door upon this other world, to manifest the right (ortho) teaching (dox) first of all in one's own life, and then to invite those who stand outside to *come and see* and, if they have the heart to accept the new birth in Christ, to partake of the life of grace within the Church that is the only preparation here below for eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. *My joy, says St. Seraphim, Acquire the Spirit of Peace (the Holy Spirit) and thousands around you will be saved.*



# ORTHODOX HEAVEN OVER AMERICA



## A Pilgrimage to - The ORTHODOX HOLY PLACES of AMERICA

Compiled and Drawn by Fr. Herman Brs.  
for THE ORTHODOX WORD-1965

Scale 1:10,000,000 OR 172.6 miles to the inch

Not in  
communion  
with the Russian  
Church Abroad



**I**N A MISTY SEPTEMBER day in 1794 a galiot arrived in the harbor of St. Paul, Kodiak, Alaska, then Russian America. The galiot, named after the *Three Hierarchy*: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom, carried to the New World the first Orthodox Mission. As soon as its eight members stepped ashore they were met by all sorts of difficulties and sorrows, and despite the highly inspiring legacy they left, the Mission was extremely short-lived. Although successful and promising in the beginning, it has actually never had an opportunity to manifest fully its potentialities. Providentially, however, it was destined to be the spiritual fountainhead of the Orthodox faith on this continent for the next century and a half.

In the first decades of its existence, the Mission gave the new Christians of the American Northwest four saints-to-be who labored for Christ our Lord on the vast American territory. The Kodiak Mission itself gave the newly-won brothers their first martyr, *Hieromonk Juvenal*, to intercede for them in heaven, and a saint *podvizhnik*, *Monk Herman*, to teach them how to live in Christ on earth. Father Herman, the holiest man ever to tread American soil, was a direct product of the greatest ascetic school Russia had seen since the times of the Abbot of Holy Russia, *St. Sergy of Radonezh*, he incorporated the traditions and experience of both the Sarov Monastery, where the great *St. Seraphim* was his contemporary, and the spiritual movement of the rebirth of *startsi*, carried out by the students of *Skbima-Archimandrite Paisy Velichkovsky*. It is quite remarkable that the Orthodox treasury of the *Philothea* was brought to America and put into practice by the very first missionaries – an important proof of their high spiritual standards. Father Herman operated a school and an orphanage and, having founded a "New Valaam" on the adjacent Spruce Island (see cover), showed the New World a true Orthodox *Life of a Saint*, remaining forever alive in the hearts of men through his miracles up to this day. A little later another great missionary, the future first active bishop in America, *Innocent Veniaminov*, began his remarkable activity in Unalaska as a perfect example of the Orthodox idea of a missionary. As his versatile work indicates, he might rightly be called the greatest missionary of the Russian Church. Holy Russia, whose representatives these first missionaries were, gave the best of her sons for the

## ORTHODOX HEAVEN OVER AMERICA

sowing of the Word of God in the New World. The first Orthodox Americans too were not passive in their acceptance of what these holy men were bringing to them, and when the time came proved to be fervent in faith and true to Christ even if it required suffering and dying as martyrs. History reveals only one such name, that of the *Aleut Peter*, martyred by Roman Catholic padres in California for his faithfulness to Holy Orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup>

The holy fire of Orthodoxy, at first brought on the galiot of *The Three Hierarchy*, and then – especially after the fall of the Russian Empire, the guardian of Holy Orthodoxy – across the great oceans on both sides of the land, grew and multiplied and, although this is not dazzlingly apparent, has given this land an Orthodox heritage, a Tradition of witness of the Holy Spirit. Today in America, as the map indicates, there are at least four wonderworking icons of the Most Holy Theotokos (the Kursk of the Sign, the Tikhvin, the Vladimir, and at least one of the weeping icons<sup>2</sup>), the wonderworking relics of Blessed Father Herman (on Spruce Island), an icon-portrait of St. Seraphim painted from life (at Novo-Diveyevo), and at least a dozen small monastic communities which carefully preserve the traditions of Pochaev, Mt. Athos, St. Seraphim's Diveyevo. These Holy Places are holy not because they house objects or traditions of historic or some other value, for some of them present a very insignificant appearance, but because of the "living water" of God's grace that flows there, either through a holy object when approached with faith, or through the holy endeavor of those who try to lead a life of *podvig* there.

If it be only God's will, the potential holiness of these places, like the Gospel leaven, could grow into a grand and glorious witness of God's dwelling amongst men. This is, perhaps, one motive that animates the present-day movement for a united Orthodox Church in



Father Herman

1. The available information on this Orthodox martyr will appear soon in *The Orthodox Word*. On the Kodiak Mission see *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 5ff. On Bp. Innocent see Procius Yasuo Ushimaru, *Bishop Innocent, Founder of American Orthodoxy* (reviewed in *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 37ff).

2. Besides the miracle of tears, the third icon has also performed miraculous healings.



## THE ORTHODOX WORD

America. But there is too much that is questionable in this movement. The intention is to unite into one administrative body not only canonically valid Orthodox Churches, but also various canonically and spiritually deviant bodies calling themselves Orthodox. Further, a leading role in this movement is being played by representatives of the Patriarchate of Moscow who, instigated by the Communist Kremlin, spread the poisons of ecumenism and chiliasm with the one definite aim of destroying the very last treasure that free America possesses: the seed of genuine Orthodoxy that has been planted in her to show her the way to righteousness.

Not on such a path is the future of genuine Orthodoxy in America to be found! Administrative union among Orthodox Churches is the least thing that is needed today. Those who are practicing true Orthodoxy are already one and united in spirit. What is actually needed is personal *podvig* in the full Orthodox Tradition from everyone who consciously calls himself Orthodox. No other kind of Orthodoxy has ever produced saints, in America or anywhere else.


This is why we can do no better than look to the *Orthodox Heaven* which, through God's mercy, has been placed *over America*, both as a protection of the faith and the faithful that reside in her, and as a source of Divine help in the economy of our earthly transfiguration and heavenly salvation. In view of the gathering darkness over the whole world, with America remaining the last stronghold of the free world's consciousness, the very presence of this *Orthodox Heaven over America* cannot but increasingly draw serious attention to itself.

In the following issues of *The Orthodox Word*, God willing, we shall embark on a pilgrimage to the Holy Places of America. Each issue hereafter will contain a brief report, in the form of a pilgrim's guide, to one of the holy shrines of Orthodoxy in North America.

Gleb Podmoshensky.

## THE MIRACULOUS ICONS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

### THE WEEPING ICONS

 IF ALL THE many ways in which the All-holy Mother of God reveals Her mercies to men, there is one that stands out both as being undeniable (for it is a completely "objective" phenomenon) and as touching the heart in a most immediate way. This is the phenomenon of weeping icons, in which images of the Mother of God produce tears that are exact replicas, on the scale of the icon, of human tears -- originating in a corner of the eye and coursing down the side of the face, sometimes as distinct miniature teardrops, sometimes as a flood of tears that moistens the whole face.

America too, so late to receive Holy Orthodoxy, is now the witness of this miraculous phenomenon. Three weeping icons appeared quite suddenly, one after the other, within two weeks in the spring of 1960 among Greek families on Long Island, New York. The striking nature of this twice-repeated sign has drawn considerable attention to these icons, especially among Orthodox believers, but also among those outside the Church. Numerous articles have been written about them in American magazines and newspapers,<sup>1</sup> and in whatever cities they have appeared they have attracted large crowds of believers, as well as the simply curious.

The first weeping icon known in America was manifested in March, 1960, to the Greek family of Katsunis, living in Island Park, Long Island, New York. The young wife, standing at her evening prayers one Wednesday, noticed that one of her icons (the Mother of God without the Child) was shedding tears. She called her husband, and the two of them observed the phenomenon in awe. Others learned of it through a neighbor, and from Friday on began flocking to the modest Katsunis apartment. On Saturday the parish priest arrived and celebrated a service before the icon, and on the next day Archbishop Iakovos celebrated a service before it with two priests. Then the icon was removed

1. See, for example, *Life*, May 2, 1960, the *New York Journal American*, April 19, 1960, p. B.



### THE ORTHODOX WORD

to the church of St. Paul in Hempstead, where every Wednesday for a year there were services before it. The icon, an 8x10 lithograph, had been received by the young couple on their wedding two years before from a nun in Greece.

Four weeks later, in a house just four miles from the Katsunis house, Antonia Kulis had a dream during sleep. Christ appeared to her on the Cross and said: "You will see what will happen on Holy Thursday..." Antonia noticed tears for the first time on Passion Wednesday at about 2:30. The idea had suddenly come to her to burn incense and pray before her icons. She went with the censer into her daughter's room, where the icons were -- and froze to the spot, seeing tears in the eyes of the Mother of God. She called her husband, and together they called the priest, Fr. George.

This new weeping icon was also a simple 8x10 lithograph, printed in 1938, which had been received by Antonia from her cousin two years before. It was an icon of the Mother of God of Iveron, the original of which is on Mt. Athos. It differed from the earlier weeping icon in that tears came from both eyes and were more abundant. On Great (Passion) Thursday the icon, accompanied by nearly 1000 people, with Archbishop Iakovos at the head, was transferred to the same church of St. Paul where the first weeping icon was located; there a paraklis was served before the icon. During the services of Great Friday the flow of tears was especially noticeable. Many times it would increase. The Mother of God wished, as it were, to engrave this sign on the minds of all -- even completely cold and sceptical observers. A photograph taken of the icon testified that the flow of tears, hardly noticeable in the beginning, visibly increased the very moment the picture was taken.

The second weeping icon evoked a heightened interest also on the part of scientific investigators. They could only testify to the fact, which, even if it did not make believers of them, they could not deny. An analysis was even made -- as was done also with the first icon -- of the fluid. It was discovered only that it was not of the nature of human tears. But the miracle continued. The Mother of God as it were paid no attention to these blasphemous displays of human curiosity.

The number of people who came to see and venerate the second weeping icon by far surpassed the already large number that had come to see the first. Now the ever-growing crowds were to be numbered, no

OPPOSITE: The third weeping icon, "of the Passion" —







Courtesy of James E. Hesly

*The second weeping icon, of Icon  
Traces of the tears appear as  
two streams coming from the eyes  
teardrops on the forehead and cheeks.  
The mark on the right cheek portrays  
the blood which flowed from the cheek  
of the original icon when it was  
pierced by an iconoclast in the  
9th century*

longer by hundreds, but by thousands; a never ending line of people extended far outside the church. On Easter Tuesday the late Metropolitan Anastassy, together with clergy of the Russian Church Abroad, came to revere the icon.

In place of the icon which had been placed in church, Archbishop Iakovos gave Antonia another lithograph-icon, that of the Mother of God "of the Passion," so called because of the angels on either side who hold the instruments of our Lord's Passion. Soon thereafter, on May 14, 1960, this new icon in its turn began to weep, and it too was taken to the Greek church in Hempstead. It was there a comparatively short time together with the first two weeping icons, during which time the icons were seen by a large number of people. Soon, however, the Mother of God appeared in a dream to the owner of the icon, saying: "I do not want to be here, take Me away; I want to be in your house."

At the present time the first icon is located in the chapel of the Greek Archdiocese in New York City; the second icon is still in the

## THE WEEPING ICONS

church of St. Paul in Hempstead; and the third is in the possession of the Kulis family. All three icons have periodically been taken to Orthodox churches, both Greek and Russian, throughout America and have attracted widespread interest and veneration -- especially the third icon, that of the Passion, which has shed abundant tears now for over five years

The fact of the weeping icons is indisputable. Having witnessed it and accepted it, one is inevitably led to ask: what is the significance of this phenomenon? For signs such as these have a meaning in the language of faith which is the means of communication between this world and the other world. The response of devout Orthodox people and clergy who have seen and prayed before the icons points to a single, nearly unanimous interpretation of their meaning. But to corroborate this one must turn to the tradition of the Church, to seek there similar manifestations from the past, and to discover the historical role they played and the reaction to them of contemporary saints, hierarchs, and devout people. As it turns out, the phenomenon, though rare, is by no means without precedent in Church history. From Russian sources alone it has been possible to find nine examples, covering a period of eight centuries, before the most recent weeping icons; and these are doubtless not the only examples. They will be noted here in chronological order.

1. *The Mother of God of the Sign, of Novgorod.* This icon became celebrated at the time of the siege of Novgorod in the 12th century. St. John, Bishop of Novgorod, was praying for the third night for the deliverance of the city, when from an icon before which he was praying a voice came, ordering him to go to a certain church and take from it the icon of the Mother of God of the Sign, from which was to come the salvation of Novgorod. This was done, and the icon was placed on the city wall with its face to the enemy. A veritable shower of arrows was falling, and suddenly one of these pierced the icon. The icon of itself turned toward the city, and from the eyes of the Mother of God tears poured forth. The holy archpastor took his chasuble and began to collect in it the tears which were dropping from the icon. He exclaimed: "O, most glorious wonder -- from dry wood flow tears! By this, O Queen, Thou givest us a sign that Thou art praying to Thy Son and our God for the deliverance of the city." The whole city began to pray fervently. An inexplicable terror fell upon the enemy; they were enveloped



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by a dense darkness and turned on each other. In this way the city was saved on February 25, 1170.

2. *The Hodigitria of Cherska (or of Pskov).* In the year 1420 a terrible epidemic broke out in the province of Pskov. The people in despair sought consolation in prayer to God and His Most Holy Mother. On July 16, in a church in the village of Cherska, there was a great sign: from the eyes of an icon of the Hodigitria Mother of God there flowed tears. News of this miracle spread quickly, and multitudes flocked to venerate the newly-glorified icon. When, under orders from the Prince of Pskov, the icon was transported to that city, the miracle was repeated as the Prince came to meet the icon, and the triumphal procession was stopped and a moleben of thanksgiving celebrated on the spot. The icon was then placed permanently in the Holy Trinity Cathedral of Pskov.

3. *The Mother of God of Ilyin-Chernigov.* This icon was painted in 1658 by a monk, and was located in a monastery near Chernigov. For eight days in the year 1662 (April 16-24), the icon wept, of which fact the whole population of Chernigov were witnesses. St. Dimitry of Rostov testified that "on this miracle everyone in the city of Chernigov looked with great fear." An historian of that time, Velichko, explained the reason for the weeping thus: By this means the Mother of God was revealing Her special love and mercy to believers who venerate Her icon, and also Her compassion for the miserable condition of the Orthodox Little Russians, who were suffering the misfortunes of civil war, captivity, and tyranny. In the same year the Tartars attacked Chernigov and laid it waste; here, apparently, was the specific reason for the tears of the Mother of God. The monks heard about this attack in advance and hid in the cave of St. Anthony of Pechersk; the Tartars destroyed much of the monastery but did not find the monks nor do the icon any harm.

4. *The Kazan Icon of Kaplunovka.* This icon was revealed to a devout priest in the village of Kaplunovka, district of Kharkov, in the year 1689. In obedience to a dream which he had had several nights before, he bought from the third of three traveling icon painters the eighth icon he offered, one of the Kazan Mother of God. He placed the icon in his room and kept a candle lit before it day and night. In the night of the third Sunday afterwards, the Mother of God appeared to him in a dream and said: "Do not force Me to be in your room, but take Me to My church!" The church in Kaplunovka was dedicated to the Birth of

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the Mother of God. On awaking he went to the icon and discovered that tears were pouring from the eyes of the Mother of God. He immediately called the people and told them about the icon; and after a moleben had been served before it, the icon was triumphantly transferred to the church, where it was glorified by many miracles. Twenty years later the icon attained national significance when the Swedes passed through Kaplunovka in their invasion of Russia; Tsar Peter ordered the priest to travel with the miraculous icon in his army, and before the Battle of Poltava he prayed fervently before the icon. After the Russian victory the icon was taken to Moscow and then returned to Kaplunovka; Tsar Peter adorned it with a riza and a shrine.

5. *The Kazan Icon of Tambov.* When St. Pitirim was Bishop of Tambov, he had a difficult time: the moral character of the city was low, and he had to fight much especially with new arrivals in the city. With this in view he had placed upon the two chief gates of the city two superb icons: one of the Crucifixion, and one of the Kazan Mother of God. The latter icon had been in the old Tambov Cathedral and had become glorified by a remarkable miracle. According to the Tambov Annals, "on December 6, 1695, during the all-night vigil in the wooden cathedral church, tears flowed from the eyes of the Kazan Mother of God..." It was probably after this miracle that the icon was ordered placed upon the city gate for the veneration of all. Many began coming to the icon to entreat help in their afflictions; veneration of the icon increased, though it apparently did not weep again, and there were healings.

6. *The Sokolsky Icon of Roumania.* This icon of the Mother of God was located in the church of the Orthodox Theological Academy at the Sokolsky Monastery in Roumania. After the Liturgy in the seminary church on February 1, 1854, it was noticed that this icon was weeping. The rector of the seminary, Bishop Philaret Skriban, was among the witnesses of this miracle. He took the icon out of its frame, looked at it carefully, wiped the traces of the tears off with a cloth, and replaced the icon. He then asked all to leave, and he locked the church. When the rector, together with the teachers and seminarians, came to church for vespers several hours later, all were struck by the same miraculous flow of tears from the eyes of the Mother of God. The rector immediately served a moleben and acathist before the icon. Soon all of Roumania knew of the miracle and began streaming to the monastery to



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venerate the icon. News of it spread throughout Russia also, and found a place in a chapter ("God's People") of Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* — where it received a blasphemous treatment by the author, as ever unwilling to accept God's grace. The miraculous flow of tears occurred sometimes daily, and sometimes with an interval of two, three, or four days. Many were thus able to see the very miracle of weeping, and those who did not at least could see the traces left by the tears. Even sceptics became convinced of the miracle. A certain colonel was sent by the commanding officer of the Austrian occupation force (during the Crimean War) to investigate the rumored miracle, and to his astonishment witnessed the actual flow of tears. An important testimony of the miracle was offered by Bishop Melchisedek of Romansk, one of its first witnesses. Thirty-five years after the event, he spoke of how he had long pondered the question of the meaning of the tears of the Mother of God. He came to the conclusion that such weeping icons had existed also in ancient times, and that such an event always foretold a severe trial for the Church of Christ and for the nation. History justified this conclusion in the case of the Roumanian weeping icon. During the Crimean War the Principality of Moldavia was occupied by Austrian troops and subjected to severe trials. The Sokolsky Monastery, in particular, had a sad future: this formerly great religious center of Roumania, serving for a hundred years as a seedbed of spiritual culture, was suppressed, the seminary moved elsewhere, and the monks dispersed.

7. *The Smolensk Icon of the Nizhegorod Caves Monastery.* In the life of the remarkable and holy starets, Hieromonk Mardary, there is the following incident: In the year 1854 a poor widow whose daughter was sick came to the starets to take oil from the lamp that burned constantly before the icon of the Smolensk Mother of God in the monastery church. The starets went with her to the church — and they saw tears streaming from the eyes of the Mother of God. Astonished, they prayed a long time before the icon without understanding what the tears signified. The widow wiped the tears from the icon with a cloth and brought it home together with the oil; the tears and the oil together healed the sick girl. The starets meanwhile told a monk about the tears and remarked: "This signifies something extraordinary; is everything all right in Petersburg?" Within less than a week word was received of the news that brought sorrow to all Russia — the reverses of the Crimean War.

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8. *The Tikhvin Icon of Mount Athos.* This icon is located behind the altar in the Skete of the Prophet Elijah on Mt. Athos. On Thursday of the second week of Lent, February 17, 1877, after the Lenten hours had been read, seven monks who remained in church saw plain traces of tears coming from the right eye of the icon and streaming down to the frame, where they collected; from the left eye, in the sight of all, a single large teardrop rolled down. The witnesses examined the icon carefully, wiped off the tears, and left the church, locking the door behind them. Three hours later the monks returned for vespers, and on the Tikhvin icon they again saw traces of tears and, in the left eye, a teardrop. The monks again wiped the tears from the icon, and after this the miracle was not repeated. In this weeping icon the monks saw a miraculous sign of the mercy of the Queen of Heaven, and they established a yearly feast in honor of the icon on February 17.

9. *The Mother of God of Pruzhen, Poland.* One of the most significant events of our times occurred on April 9, 1934, in the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in the city of Pruzhen. It was Easter Friday. Tears began to flow from the eyes of the Mother of God represented as standing beside Christ on the Cross. This extraordinary miracle was witnessed not only by Orthodox believers, but also by Catholics, sectarians, and even unbelievers. They all testified of this fact also before a special investigating committee sent by the bishop of the Polessk diocese. This committee, after a thorough investigation, acknowledged the indisputability of the miracle. News of the miracle spread rapidly through the whole diocese and the surrounding area. Pilgrimages were started. People flocked by the thousands to the wonderworking icon the whole summer of 1934, and church processions to the icon continued in the following years.

These examples of weeping icons in the history of the Orthodox Church permit an historical perspective of the contemporary weeping icons and allow one to make certain general statements about them. They are not new to Orthodox experience, but they have been extremely rare, and to very few has it been granted to see the tears of the Mother of God more than once in a lifetime. Yet the response to them on the part of Orthodox believers is ever one and the same, coming as it does from the Christian consciousness that is developed in one according to the depth of his participation in the life of the Church.



## THE ORTHODOX WORD

By Her tears the Mother of God shows Her nearness to men, Her concern for them, and the power and warmth of Her prayer for them. Her intercession for the human race becomes, as it were, visible in Her tears. Seeing this miraculous sign Orthodox Christians are themselves moved to fervent prayer; the response of the first witnesses of the weeping icons throughout the centuries has always been immediately to celebrate a service of prayer before them, and the icons become after this a center of pilgrimage.

But beside the general purpose of calling Christians to prayer, the weeping icons have almost invariably served a more specific function. They have been a sign to believers, sometimes of a single city, sometimes of a whole province or nation, of an impending misfortune affecting all, the rareness of the sign being an indication of the extraordinary character of the event it portends. The tears of the Mother of God are a kind of final warning of the impending catastrophe -- which is always, as Orthodox Christians well know, sent by God as a chastisement for sin -- and a final call to sincere repentance and fervent prayer. The outcome is not always certain. Often, indeed, the weeping icons have been followed by disaster; but occasionally, after great peril, disaster has been averted. Here, as in all God's dealings with men, the freedom of man plays an important role; the fervency and depth of man's response to the heavenly tears help to determine whether the misfortune will be averted.

Of all the weeping icons, however, the new weeping icons of America are the most extraordinary. One weeping icon was followed by a second, and then by a third; and there have been tears, not for a day or a week, but -- from the third icon -- for over five years. If the weeping icons in general have been a sign to believers, these newest ones are unmistakably so. What precisely they portend no one, of course, can say; but whatever it is, it evidently concerns all Orthodox people in America, and perhaps the whole nation as well. Certainly there is much in America today that could call forth Divine chastisement. In many Orthodox Churches in America the departure from traditional Orthodox faith and practice has advanced so far as to make union with the apostate Church of Rome a logical next step, and indications are that this step will not be long in coming; multitudes of Orthodox believers relax the disciplined spiritual life prescribed by the Church in order to follow the increasingly self-indulgent example of the American populace; and this same populace gives no indication of seeing in its own still-free land a last bulwark

## THE WEEPING ICONS

against the soul-devouring monster of Communism, but rather abandons its last vestige of Christian conscience to lead a life inspired by indifference and atheism, thus hastening the advent of the universal atheist regime.

It is not America alone that has witnessed the tears of the Mother of God in our own day. In New Zealand a photograph of the Tikhvin Mother of God of Mt. Athos, which itself wept in 1877, began to weep in June, 1956, and has continued to weep periodically since then; this icon was received in 1952 from a monk on the Holy Mountain. And in Greece, in the village of Ersova near Mt. Athos, at about the same time a lithograph icon of the Mother of God wept for forty consecutive days such copious tears that they were collected in bottles. Perhaps these signs in distant continents are related to the American weeping icons, and they all together portend some event of concern to the entire world. Some monks on Mt. Athos and elsewhere believe they refer to an event for which, as numerous other signs indicate, the world would seem at last to be ripe: the birth of Antichrist.

What is certain is that these tears of the Mother of God speak directly to the heart of every Orthodox believer, calling all to repentance, amendment of life, and a return to Orthodox faith and tradition in their fullness.

*Eugene Ross.*

### SOURCES:

- Icon no. 1: St. Dimitri of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints* (Sept.).
- Icons nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8: E. Poselyanin, *The Mother of God*.
- Icons nos. 5, 7: Bp. Nikodim of Belgorod, *Russian Podvizhniks of the 19th and 20th Centuries* (July, p. 537; April, pp. 104-5).
- Icon no. 9: Archpriest Nicholas Dombrovsky, in *Orthodox Russia*, 1950 (no. 10).
- The contemporary weeping icons:
  - In America: *Orthodox Russia*, 1960 (nos. 6, 8, 16, 19).
  - In New Zealand: *Orthodox Russia*, 1962 (no. 4).
  - In Greece: *Orthodox Russia*, 1960 (no. 10).



## A REVELATION OF SAINT NICHOLAS TODAY

*From the secret life of believers in the USSR; the city of Kuibyshev, 1950<sup>1</sup>*

**L**ET THE WHOLE earth with devout heart bow before Thee and hymn Thee and Thy Name, O Most High. Wishing to turn many from the path of impiety to true faith, the Lord permitted a girl such a blasphemy! To take an icon of the holy Wonderworker Nicholas and dance with it! Let all know the Lord's chastisement and His great mercy. The abyss of sin calls forth the abyss of God's mercy, and the power of grace abounds in the place where sin multiplies.

On New Year's Day according to the new calendar, when Christians are observing the Advent fast, Zoya got the idea of having a party with dancing. Her devout mother protested, and herself went that evening to pray in church. Seven young people came to the party, and they formed pairs for dancing. Zoya's boyfriend Nicholas did not come. Without giving it a second thought Zoya took an icon of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker and said: "I'll dance with him." Zoya didn't listen to the warnings of her friends, answering: "If there is a God, He will punish me."

Two dances had already been finished when suddenly a noise burst upon the room, a whirlwind arose, and a flash like lightning. Revelry turned into terror, and everyone fled from the room. Zoya alone remained standing with the icon of the Saint clasped to her breast; she was turned to stone. None of the efforts of the doctors who came could restore her to a normal condition. Needles bent and broke against her petrified skin; but her heart was beating and she was alive -- for the Lord is good, and His mercy is to generations... Her feet were as if chained to the floor...

For the first days the house was surrounded by crowds of people; but soon the building was closed to visitors. Two militiamen remained on duty at all times, in eight-hour shifts. And it was these very guards, like the Roman soldiers at the Cross and at the Tomb of the Lord, who were the first witnesses of the great signs and miracles that occurred.

Zoya's uninterrupted silence was broken by cries one midnight that terrified the guards and her grieving mother, who spent her whole

1. A document recently received from the USSR; *Orthodox Russia*, May 28, 1963. Abridged.

## SAINT NICHOLAS

time at prayer. Several of the guards turned gray and lost their minds from terror at the midnight cries: "Mother, pray, pray, mother!" On Christmas Day came Hieromonk Seraphim, full of faith and good will. He blessed water before the image of the Saint, and with fear of God and faith he easily took the icon from Zoya's hands, saying the while: "We must wait for signs on the Great Day (Easter)..." On the feast of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, a devout old man came and, by God's Providence, was allowed to see Zoya. They heard him gently saying to her: "Well, so you're tired of standing!" How long he stayed no one knew, only when the guard remembered that it was time to let him out, it turned out that there was no one there but the cold figure of Zoya. And that same day the girl's mouth was opened, when they asked where the old man had gone, Zoya answered: "He went into the corner in front." Marvellous is the Lord in his Saints, the God of Holy Russia.

Four months passed, 123 days, and then, in the night of the Radiant Resurrection of Christ, Zoya began to call out with a loud voice: "The world is burning horribly, pray, the world is burning, it will perish in its sins, put on crosses, wear crosses, pray, it is terrible, all around the earth is reeling like a drunkard, swaying like a cradle, its sins are weighing it down (Ps. 24: 20). Pray!"

She began to revive. Her muscles began to soften. They took her and laid her down. She continued to call out and ask people to pray for the world burning in sin, for the earth perishing in lawlessness... "How did you live, who fed you?" "Doves fed me"; and in this was clearly proclaimed the forgiveness of the Lord, Who pardons sinners and sends the grace of the Holy Spirit upon His creatures... The Lord pardoned her through the intercession of the merciful Wonderworker, St. Nicholas.

The whole city and every unbeliever who wore no cross around his neck put on crosses and went to kiss holy objects... In fear and tears the people prayed for the forgiveness of their sins...

On the third day of Easter Zoya departed to the Lord, having travelled a painful path of standing before the face of the Lord for the expiation of her sin; and the Spirit in the form of a dove preserved her life holily and secretly, that she might awaken from sleep on the Radiant Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, the body of a resurrected soul being renewed for eternal life. For the very word Zoya means life.

Amen.



## NEW BOOKS

RUSSIAN AMERICA, THE GREAT ALASKAN VENTURE, 1741-1867. By Hector Chevigny. The Viking Press, 1965. 274 pp. \$5.95.

Russian America was a center of trade and exploration, and its capital, New Archangel (Sitka), an established town with a cathedral, seminary, college, and two scientific institutes, when the western United States was still a crude frontier and San Francisco a village of under a hundred inhabitants. Little we know of our Orthodox heritage in America; not much has been available in English, and even less of something that would give some general idea of its background and the motives that brought it. The able Alaskan expert, Hector Chevigny, having written previously two highly valuable biographies of Alaskan figures during the Russian period, has recently published a splendid book, masterfully painting a broad historic panorama of the whole Alaskan Venture that was to bring Holy Orthodoxy to this continent. It is from this perspective especially that we wish to focus the attention of the reader on this valuable work.

The book, well researched and movingly written, is probably the best early history of Alaska; and though the question of Orthodoxy is not deliberately treated, nevertheless the grand sweep of the narrative reflects enough of the trace of holiness upon Alaska's past. But despite the high praise that is due the author, we must caution the reader about a decided flaw of the book, a flaw that reveals the author's lack of concrete un-

derstanding of the very heart of early Alaskan history. This is his treatment of the missionaries of Alaska. The author, a Westerner to the core, quite naturally judges with the eye that sees in a missionary the educational and administrative functionary, bringing to the heathen the so-called civilized way of life. However penetrating his treatment of Russian Alaska, the Orthodox understanding of mission remains to him a land unknown. He fails to see in its laborers what civilization itself fails to see in Christianity -- Christ Himself. But this is precisely what they reflected most of all; this is what they themselves came for so far and what they, regardless of the unfavorable conditions under which they worked, their helpless poverty, and lack of administrative ability, managed to impress on the wild heathen -- our Lord Jesus Christ. This Christ-likeness of theirs made some of them obvious saints, and to this the keen mind of the author is totally blind.

What, after all, was the purpose of this whole enthusiastic endeavor, of all the money and talent poured into the colonization of Alaska? For us, young Orthodox Americans, the Alaskan Venture was the battlefield upon which Holy Orthodoxy was to step out on the American continent, to shine out through the years as a witness of the Truth that came to earth to transfigure men into new beings.

*Gleb Podmosbensky.*

## THE ORTHODOX WORD, VOLUME 1, 1965

### ERRATA

Page 17, line 10 up	For fulfill read fulfill
Page 29, line 8 up	For after read just before
Page 41, line 4	For yealded read yielded
Page 41, line 8 up	For who read who,
Page 87, bottom line	For Emperor read Tsar
Page 98, line 14 up	E Paselyanin did not die before the Russian Revolution, but was executed by the Bolsheviks, being thus a "new martyr" of the Communist yoke.
Page 135, line 14 up	For pute read pure
Page 141, line 5	For Tone 4 read Tone 7
Page 215, line 15	For weeks read months
Page 221, line 15	For the two chief gates read the chief gate

The next issue of *The Orthodox Word* will contain the life of St. Mark the Anchorite, with illustrations by the late Fotis Kontoglous; the complete text of St. Gregory Palamas on unceasing prayer; "The Sunday of Orthodoxy," by Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich; and other articles, including a report and discussion of important recent events in the Orthodox world.

To be published separately in 1966:

*Father Herman, Alaska's Saint*, by F. Golder, together with fourteen miracles of Father Herman.

*The Beginnings of Holy Orthodoxy in San Francisco, 1859-1900*, by J. Gregerson. The early years of the Russian Orthodox Mission in the United States; the first book in a projected series by various authors: "The History of the Orthodox Church in America."

Publication dates will be announced in *The Orthodox Word*.



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